

SPEECH.

In Committee of the Whole on the state of the Union, on the Resolutions referring the President's Message to the various Standing Committees,

Mr. McCLERNAND addressed the House as follows :

Mr. CHAIRMAN : It is due, perhaps, to the committee, that I should renew the apology now, which I felt constrained to offer the other day when I appealed to the committee to adjourn this question temporarily, to enable me to speak upon it under more favorable circumstances. Certainly, sir, upon no other ground than that of physical indisposition, would I have ventured so far from my humble course here as to have asked for so great a concession. In return, gentlemen, for your kindness and consideration, I can only offer you the humble tribute of my thanks and gratitude, which I beg you to accept.

These, Mr. Chairman, are critical and portentous times; an accidental conjuncture threatens the success of the cherished principles of Democracy, and all who are friendly to the present republican Administration are imperiously called upon to come forth promptly and boldly in its defence. All who profess to be Democrats should now prove their faith by their works. For one, sir, I propose to do this; and, that I may do it with the more success, I shall indulge in a somewhat extensive range of debate.

First, sir, it is my purpose to review the great measures that distinguished the internal or domestic policy of the present Executive Administration, and in like manner, on some future occasion, its external or foreign policy—especially the justice of our cause in the existing war with Mexico; thus affording, as a whole, a general survey of the conduct of our Government in the most important events of modern times.

Proceeding, sir, at once to the first and present branch of my pregnant theme, I will be allowed to premis that great and fundamental changes have occurred in the administration of the Government within a few years past. Upon the accession of the Democratic party to the control of Congress in 1843 and 1844, they found the policy lately before established by Federalists in full operation. True, President Tyler, as if directed by some divine power, had arrested that fearful and fatal consummation—a United States bank; but other measures little less mischievous survived to afflict the country. The mandamus and distribution acts still

blotted the statute book; the question of the policy and power of this Government to engage in schemes of internal improvement remained to be settled; the black tariff to be replaced by a revenue tariff; the constitutional treasury to be restored; and the graduation principle, if possible, ingrafted upon the present land system. In short, a thorough work of reform and restoration challenged our best efforts. And how was that work performed? We shall sec.

Upon the meeting of the twenty-eighth Congress in 1843 and 1844, the members of the House of Representatives found themselves much embarrassed by a serious and important question, that stood in the way of the very organization of the body—which forced them to choose between disregarding what purported to be a law, and excluding several of the States from a voice in the proceedings of the body. This was the effect of the mandamus act, which deserves to be explained. The Constitution declares that—

"The times, places, and manner of holding elections for Senators and Representatives shall be prescribed in each State by the Legislature thereof; but the Congress may at any time, by law, make or alter such regulations, except as to the places of choosing Senators."

This provision of the Constitution is of plain and obvious import; but a Federal Congress was not content to obey it. Rendered arrogant by the possession of ill-gotten power, they assumed the dictatorial authority to demand of the States to "make such regulations" as the Constitution left only to Congress to make: in other words, they assumed to do indirectly what they were afraid to do directly. They passed a law requiring such of the States as elected Representatives by "general ticket" to cease to do so, and elect by "districts." The design of the law was obvious: it was to force New Hampshire, Georgia, Mississippi, and Missouri—four Democratic States—to abandon the mode of electing by general ticket, and to elect by districts. And its immediate effect would have been to exclude the Representatives from those States, eighteen out of twenty-one of whom were Democrats, from a seat in the House. Such, sir, would have been the effect of the law. Well, what was the result? The States compromised by the usurpation, and a Democratic Congress, true in their devotion to the Constitution and to State rights, disregarded it. They disregarded it for numerous reasons, cogent and strong. It was unconstitutional, because it affirmed a subordination of the States to Federal authority,

unknown to the Constitution; because, by a sort of legislative alchemy, it converted one power into two—the power of Congress to do a particular act into a compound power to require the States to do the same act. It was inexpedient, because it was designed to take immediate effect, which would have caused several of the States to incur the expense and trouble of holding extra sessions of their Legislatures to give the mandate effect. It was wrong, because its motive and its object was to contribute to a miserable, paltry, party triumph. And for these and other reasons, it was in effect set aside; and thus the way was opened to the great and brilliant political reformation which have followed under Mr. Polk's administration.

The first of these, Mr. Chairman, to which I shall give my attention, is that which recent and present circumstances seem to demand should be first noticed: I refer to the bold and patriotic stand taken by the President upon the subject of internal improvements by this Government. I shall speak first to this subject, because justice to truth and the President demand that the attacks made upon both should be immediately repelled. Well, sir, what has been the course of the President upon this perplexing question? Upon succeeding to the Presidency, like President Jackson, he found himself much embarrassed by its inherent difficulties; which difficulties have been greatly aggravated by the conflicting legislation of Congress upon the subject. It is a fact, that for more than thirty years after the organization of the present Government, no act was passed by Congress appropriating public money for river and harbor improvements. It appears that our predecessors accorded this power to the States peculiarly. Warned by the experience of other nations, they held that an absolute money power was absolute despotism: and, therefore, such of them as assisted in framing the Federal Constitution, through a jealous fear, were unwilling to unite such a power with that of the sword, which was given to this Government. Such a conjunction—the purse and the sword—they thought would prove as disastrous to liberty here as it had elsewhere. Hence, in 1817 and 1818, Congress, in pursuance of this example of abstinence from the exercise of doubtful powers, passed the following declaratory resolutions in the negative; and that, too, after a protracted and elaborate debate, in which such statesmen as Barbour of Virginia, Blount of Tennessee, Cobb of Georgia, Desha of Kentucky, Holmes of Massachusetts, and Ringgold of Maryland, took an active and conspicuous part in the negative. The resolutions are as follow:

1st. Resolved, That Congress has power, under the Constitution, to construct post-roads and military roads: *Provided*, That private property be not taken for public use without just compensation.

Yea 82, nays 84.

2d. Resolved, That Congress has power, under the Constitution, to construct roads and canals necessary for commerce between the States: *Provided*, That private property be not taken for public purposes without just compensation.

Yea 71, nays 95.

3d. Resolved, That Congress has power, under the Constitution, to construct canals for military purposes: *Provided*, That no private property be taken for any such purpose without just compensation therefor.

Yea 81, nays 83.

Such, sir, was the course of Congress upon this

subject down to 1817 and 1818, and such the ground upon which it was rested. Yet, sir, according to the history of organized power everywhere, we find that in 1829, when General Jackson succeeded to the Presidency, this early and long-continued construction of the Constitution had been overthrown, and a most loose and latitudinous one adopted in its stead. Wild and extravagant schemes of internal improvement had become the order of the day. During the immediately previous administration of Mr. Adams, this policy had found the greatest favor and had been pushed to excess; so much so, that in less than ten years after its introduction, more than \$200,000,000 had been asked for various objects of internal improvement. President Jackson saw that the alarming evil demanded a speedy remedy, and he then boldly and nobly stepped forth to save his country from a career of corruption, bankruptcy, and ruin, as he had before saved her from the arms of a foreign foe upon the ever-memorable plains of New Orleans. He vetoed or refused to sign the following acts:

"An act making appropriations for building light-houses, light-boats, beacons, and monuments, placing buoys, improving harbors, and directing surveys." "An act authorizing subscription for stock in the Louisville and Portland Canal Company." "An act for the improvement of certain harbors, and the navigation of certain rivers." And finally, "An act to improve the navigation of the Wabash river."

In his objections to the last-mentioned act, he says:

"The desire to embark the Federal Government in works of internal improvement prevailed, in the highest degree, during the first session of the first Congress that I had the honor to meet in my present situation. When the bill authorizing a subscription on the part of the United States for stock in the Mayville and Lexington Turnpike Company passed the two Houses, there had been reported by the Committee on Internal Improvements bills containing appropriations for such objects, exclusive of those for the Cumberland road, and for harbors and light-houses, to the amount of about one hundred and six millions of dollars. In this amount was included authority to the Secretary of the Treasury to subscribe for the stock of different companies to a great extent, and the residue was principally for the direct construction of roads by this Government. In addition to these projects, which have been presented to the two Houses under the sanction and recommendation of their respective Committees on Internal Improvements, there were then still pending before the committees, and in memorials to Congress, presented, but not referred, different projects for works of a similar character, the expense of which cannot be estimated with certainty, but must have exceeded one hundred millions of dollars."

Much, sir, was thus done by President Jackson to correct a growing evil, the consummation of which must be corruption, bankruptcy, and ruin; but still, much remained to be done. The rule he laid down only reached a part of the evil, and did not go far enough; as he afterwards admitted. It was reserved for Mr. Polk to extend the rule, and strike at the root of the whole evil—to finish the work commenced by his illustrious predecessor. And how has he finished it? Simply by referring the subject of river and harbor improvements to the States, who may clearly take cognizance of it, with the consent of Congress. But I will let the President speak for himself. He says:

"The Constitution provides that 'no State shall, without the consent of Congress, lay any duty of tonnage.' With the 'consent' of Congress, such duties may be levied, collected, and expended by the States. We are not lost in the dark as to the objects of this reservation of power to the

States. The subject was fully considered by the convention that framed the Constitution. It appears, in Mr. Madison's report of the proceedings of that body, that one object of the reservation was, that the States should not be restrained from laying duties of tonnage for the purpose of clearing harbors. Other objects were named in the debates; and among them, the support of seamen. Mr. Madison, treating on this subject in the Federalist, declares that—

"The restraint on the power of the States over imports and exports is enforced by all the arguments which prove the necessity of submitting the regulation of trade to the Federal Councils. It is needless, therefore, to remark further on this head, than that the manner in which the restraint is qualified seems well calculated at once to secure to the States a reasonable discretion in providing for the convenience of their imports and exports, and to the United States a reasonable check against the abuse of this discretion."

"The States may lay tonnage duties for clearing harbors, improving rivers, or for other purposes; but are restrained from abusing the power, because, before such duties can take effect, the 'consent' of Congress must be obtained. Here is a safe provision for the improvement of harbors and rivers in the reserved powers of the States, and in the aid they may derive from duties of tonnage levied with the consent of Congress. Its safeguards are, that both the State Legislatures and Congress have to concur in the act of raising the funds; that they are in every instance to be levied upon the commerce of those ports which are to profit by the proposed improvement; that no question of conflicting power or jurisdiction is involved; that the expenditure being in the hands of those who are to pay the money and be immediately benefited, will be more carefully managed and more productive of good than if the funds were drawn from the national treasury, and disbursed by the officers of the General Government; that such a system will carry with it no enlargement of Federal power and patronage, and leave the States to be the sole judges of their own wants and interests, with only a conservative negative in Congress upon any abuse of the power which the States may attempt."

"Under this wise system, the improvement of harbors and rivers was commenced, or rather continued, from the organization of the Government under the present Constitution. Many acts were passed by the several States levying duties of tonnage, and many were passed by Congress giving their consent to those acts. Such acts have been passed by Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia, and have been sanctioned by the consent of Congress."

Such, Mr. Chairman, is a brief outline of the history of internal improvements by this Government, and such has been Mr. Polk's course upon that subject. Who now shall reproach him for broaching a new and untried theory? Who now shall condemn him for exercising, according to the dictates of his conscience, an unquestionable constitutional power—for vetoing one or two bills, the titles of which professed what was falsified by their enactments?—which united in grotesque and corrupt conjunction Great Wood Hole, Little Sodus bay, Hog Island channel, and the like nomenclature, with the mighty Mississippi and great lakes—which would have taken from the treasury, in time of war, perhaps millions of money, and thereby lessened the ability of the Government to feed and clothe our armies and maintain their success in the field; which would have created a national debt *pro tanto*, and thereby, perhaps, a national bank—thus leading ultimately to the corruption and consolidation of our system of Government, and consequently to despotism. I too, sir, voted against these bills, for which I also have been abused; but with no other effect than to confirm me in a fearless and faithful discharge of my duty. I also voted against a certain resolution declaratory of the power of Congress over the subject of internal improvements, which was adopted here a few days ago. I voted against that resolution for many reasons, and, among others, because I thought it was thrust upon the House out of time and propriety; because the previous question

was asked upon it before it was read at the Clerk's desk, which was ordered by the combined vote of the Federal side of the House—thus cutting off all debate, consideration—

Mr. BROADHEAD. And amendment; and to brings the Democratic party into trouble.

Mr. McCLEERNAND. Yes, sir, and amendment. I voted against it, because it appears to be artfully drawn up, so as to afford a constitutional sanction to profligate bills already vetoed, or which may hereafter deserve to be vetoed; and because, too, I thought I discovered a covert blow in it, aimed at the President, as was proven to be true by the declaration made immediately upon the passage of the resolution, that "a bill would be founded upon it which would be passed over the President's head."

I have reason to believe, sir, that the plan proposed by the President will prove satisfactory to the State I have the honor in part to represent. Bounded on the west by the Mississippi, on the south by the Ohio, on the east by the Wabash—three great rivers, floating a vast amount of commerce and tonnage—she would be furnished with ample means, at the lowest rate of tonnage duties, to improve and perfect the navigation of these and other rivers, including the Illinois and Rock rivers, in which she is immediately and greatly concerned.* Bounded on the north by Lake Michigan, there she would be equally well supplied with the means of improving and securing her only two harbors, at Chicago and Little Fort; the trade at which, especially at Chicago, the pride of our State, is now quite large, and is rapidly increasing. It will not only do all this, but it will exempt Illinois from the burden of paying heavy and perpetual contributions for the improvement of harbors and the navigation of rivers in which she is not interested. And this reasoning should apply with equal force to Indiana, Kentucky, Mississippi, Arkansas, Iowa, and Missouri—whose rich and populous city of St. Louis would afford abundant means to make and preserve one of the best harbors in the world—and, in fact, with more or less force to all the States.

The President may well suppose that those who pay have the best right to say how much, and for what, they should pay; that those who are immediately engaged in commerce are better judges of the means of facilitating and promoting it, at the least expense, than agents of this Government, owing no responsibility to them, and educated to different pursuits. In short, he affirms the competency of the States for self-government, and that the nearer delegated power can be brought to the people, its source, the better. And who shall venture to deny these great axiomatic truths?

But other considerations, Mr. Chairman, should commend the plan of the President to general favor. It will materially contribute to restrain the patronage and power of this Government within safe and

* The Wabash, for example, with its tributaries—affording, during the spring freshets, a navigation of about twenty-five hundred miles, and an outlet for about one-half of the surplus products of Indiana and about one-fourth or fifth of those of Illinois, to seek a market—has been refused appropriations by Congress to improve its navigation; but, under the plan proposed, Illinois and Indiana would be fully enabled, by laying a small duty upon the tonnage of that river, to render its navigation certain and secure. And the same may be said of the Illinois, the Cumberland, the Tennessee, and other rivers.

constitutional limits. And what is the necessity for this? Perhaps no other Government has made such rapid and gigantic strides in the acquisition of patronage. The apprehension of some of its framers, that it would prove too feeble to fulfil the purposes for which it was instituted, has long since been supplanted by the fear that it would centre in itself all the powers of our compound political system. Behold it armed with the power to declare war, to raise and support armies and navies, to call out the militia of the States, and to direct and control this formidable array, comprehending the whole physical and pecuniary ability of the country! Behold its vast patronage, displayed in a thousand forms, penetrating every part of the Union, and to the remotest bounds of our territories, subduing the capacity of the States and of the people to resist encroachment and corruption, and drawing to the support of the Government an army of two hundred thousand officers, agents, employees, and beneficiaries, more or less dependant upon its grace and favor for bread and social position.* Already, as the sheaf of the patriarch in the vision, all the other shaves are required to bow down before it, and even the stars composing our political constellation are held to render it obeisance. Twenty-one years ago, Colonel Benton, in his justly-celebrated report on Executive patronage, in the Senate, held this emphatic language:

"The power of patronage, unless checked by the vigorous interposition of Congress, must go on increasing, until Federal influence, in many parts of the Confederation, will predominate in elections, as completely as British influence predominates in the elections of Scotland and Ireland, and in the great naval stations of Portsmouth and Plymouth. In no part of the practical operation of the Federal Government has the predictions of its ablest advocates been more completely fulfilled than in this subject of patronage."

Such, sir, has been the tendency of our political system, and such already is the overshadowing influence of this Government; which influence must continue to increase in geometrical progression, as long as the public revenues and expenditures increase, from the fact, that every additional officer will bring with him an additional circle of friends, relatives, and dependants, to swell its extent. None can doubt the importance of remedying this enormous evil; but the policy of those who would embark the Government in schemes of internal improvement, would prodigiously aggravate it. Such a policy, in practice, would find no other limits than those of our territory--extending from the St. Croix to the Rio Grande, and from the Atlantic to the Pacific--and, as a necessary consequence, would involve a corresponding increase of patronage. Its end would be an oppressive public debt; and what right has the Government to mortgage the bones and muscles and toil of future generations, to pay the cost of its folly and improvidence? Such a policy, instead of inculcating public virtue and economy, must impel every State in the Union, from a sense of self-preservation, to enter into the general scramble to despoil the Government of its revenues. Its morality will be illustrated in the highest need of the Senator or Representative who can boast of having robbed the treasury of the largest amount of money. President Polk seeks to avert this terrible calamity from his country;

* The number of these persons, as estimated by Mr. Calhoun, in his elaborate report on Executive patronage in the Senate, February 9, 1835, was 100,079. Ten years time and the war, have no doubt doubled the number.

and upon the ground of public policy alone, upon which I rest this argument, his plan should prove generally acceptable.

But, sir, time presses, and I must pass on more rapidly. Early during Mr. Polk's administration, the question of the repeal of the law distributing the proceeds of the sales of the public lands among the States, came up for consideration. This measure originated with the great man of Ashland, (Mr. Clay,) who continued to urge it with his talents and influence, until it obtained the sanction of Congress. General Jackson, with different views of public policy, regarded the measure as of dangerous tendency, and, therefore, arrested its consummation by the Executive veto. We all recollect the fierce partisan war that was waged against the "Old Hero" for this act, and how he bore himself triumphantly in the contest. Thus defeated, the measure remained inoperative until 1841; when a "Federal Congress" exhumed it from the grave, and galvanized it into a sort of quondam rickety existence. Tradition tells us that *distribution*, and that other short-lived and execrable shape, the *bankrupt law*, came forth as twin and dependant offspring of the same adulterous parentage. They came forth as the formidable shapes that sprang from the brain of Lucifer to guard the gates of Hell:

"The one seem'd woman to the waist, and fair;
But ended foul in many a scaly fold,
Voluminous and vast!—a serpent arm'd
With mortal sting; about her middle round,
A cry of hell-hounds never ceasing bark'd
With wide Cerberan mouths full loud, and rung
A hideous peal; yet, when they list, would creep,
If aught disturb'd their noise, into her womb,
And kennel there."

Such was the image of that frightful moral prodigy, the *bankrupt law*, with its foul and double features of voluntary and involuntary bankruptcy; which mocked at the faith of contracts, and afforded a sanctuary for near fifty thousand debtors against the demands of their honest creditors; the enormity of which soon brought upon its authors the necessity of repealing it—of committing a sort of political infanticide.*

"The other shape,
If shape it might be called that shape had none,
Distinguishable in member, joint, or limb;
Or substance might be called, that shadow seemed,
* * * What seemed his head
The likeness of a kingly crown had on."

This, sir, was the likeness of distribution, with its shadowy and conditional operation to disperse the proceeds of the sales of the public lands among the States, when the revenue from imports, taxed at a certain maximum rate of duties, should prove sufficient to support the Government. This measure was objectionable on many accounts. It was objectionable, because its tendency was to perpetuate a land system which has already drawn more than \$100,000,000 from the infant communities of the west and southwest, as the price of the homes they have found in the wilderness; and dignify by their courage and patriotism; which has drawn from Illinois alone more than \$10,000,000, and which, aggravated by distribution, would tend to degrade the States to the character of mendicants at the throne of Federal power, by the hope of receiving periodical alms. Distribution, sir, is the

* The aggregate amount of debts given in, under the *bankrupt law*, was \$536,570,205 66; the aggregate amount of property surrendered by the debtors was \$25,315,480 12; and the aggregate number of creditors given was 1,276,889.

entering wedge of a high restrictive tariff, which must tax the people of the new States unequally as consumers, to buy more and more lands, to be sold chiefly to themselves at an advanced price, in order that the proceeds thereof may be distributed among all the States. And for these, and other reasons unnecessary here to be mentioned, the distribution act was repealed.

Yes, sir, distribution was not only repealed, but Mr. Polk and the Secretary of the Treasury, Mr. Walker, cogently recommended the antagonistic democratic measure of the graduation and reduction of the price of the public lands to settlers and cultivators. They recommended this measure; and I, as a member of the Committee on Public Lands, had the honor of bringing it in a legislative form before this House. And what was the result? It was strenuously opposed by the whole Federal phalanx; particularly by the gentleman from Vermont, [Mr. COLLAMER,] whose abilities now grace the head of the Land Committee; by the distinguished gentleman from Ohio, [Mr. VINTON,] who has been promoted to be chairman of the Committee of Ways and Means; and by the eloquent gentleman from Georgia, [Mr. STEPHENS,] with whom I have the honor to be associated on the Land Committee, and I hope not without the prospect of moving his bowels to compassion for the meritorious but much-abused class of pioneers and settlers. It was thus opposed; yet, sir, after one of the most tremendous struggles which ever occurred in Congress, it was passed by this House, and afterwards by the Senate, with some modification, which caused it to be lost for the want of time for its further consideration.

It is to be regretted, sir, that so important a measure should have been lost. Its enactment into the force of a law would have been attended with the most beneficial consequences. It would have reduced and graduated the prices of the public lands according to their actual value, and thus strengthened the liberties of the country by increasing the number of independent freeholders. It would have increased our agricultural surplus, and thereby our national wealth, by extending the area of agricultural labor. It would have hastened the period for lopping off a cumbrous and expensive branch of Federal patronage. It would have secured to the Government a fair equivalent for the public lands. In fine, it would have crowned the labors of a Democratic Administration with complete success. Lost, however, as the measure was, it is still the merit of a Democratic President and Congress that its principle was, for the first time, concurrently approved, under their auspices, by two departments of the Government.

But, sir, as glorious as are these results, another equally, if not more glorious, remains to be added. I refer to the liberation of the country, and its labor and interests, from the shackles of restrictive and oppressive tariff. As Jefferson had contributed to redeem the country from the despotism of the alien and sedition laws—as Jackson, with a bold hand, had struck down that harlot of iniquity, the United States Bank—as Van Buren had released the Government from a corrupting connection with State banks, and poised it upon its own self-acting and self-preserving powers, under the Constitution; so President Polk, emulating these great examples, has contributed powerfully, by his well-directed and persevering efforts, to relieve the

country from the blighting system of commercial restrictions.

The oppressive and unjust tariff of 1842, enacted by a Federal Congress, was in full operation when Mr. Polk came to the Presidency; and, like all other enactments founded in the interests of favored classes, was strong in its very principle of exclusion. Five hundred thousand manufacturers, with all their influence of capital, business, and association, sustained it with the unity of a common interest and the activity of one will. Clad in purple and tinselled with gold, they contended for the retention of a profit of 50, 100, and 150 per cent. per annum upon capital, against more than four millions of agriculturists, artisans, and navigators, whose only object was to obtain a fair reward for labor. The contest was for a long time doubtful. Once tawdry wealth overcame honest toil; but justice and the democracy of numbers finally triumphed, and the "black tariff" of 1842 was replaced by the revenue tariff of 1846. Happy, glorious result!—the emancipation of labor from the bonds of capital!—a second declaration of independence! The grand and instructive event should ever stand as a light and guide for the future!

Whatever, sir, may be the policy of other nations, that of the United States consists preëminently in free trade. Experience not only bears testimony to this great truth, but God himself has stamped it with an omnipotent hand in the everlasting features of the country—in its vast extent, its diversities of soil and climate, its superior adaptation to the production of breadstuffs and cotton, the great staples for feeding and clothing mankind—which, in our hands, must eventually secure us the control of the commerce and exchanges of the world. Hear, sir, what the great man who will leave a reverie impress equal to that left by Alexander Hamilton upon our civil institutions and who now presides over the Treasury Department, says of its beneficent operation and promise in his late report:

The net revenue from duties during the twelve months ending the 1st December, 1847, under the new tariff, is \$31,500,000; being \$3,528,593 more than was received during the twelve months preceding, under the tariff of 1842. The net revenue of the first quarter of the first fiscal year, under the new tariff, was \$11,103,237 41; whilst in the same quarter of the preceding year, under the tariff of 1842, the net revenue was only \$8,153,833 58. If the revenue for the three remaining quarters should equal in the average the first, then the net revenue from duties, during the first fiscal year of the new tariff, would be \$44,425,029 64. If, however, the comparison is founded on all the quarterly returns for forty-eight years, (as far back as given quarterly in the treasury records,) and the same proportion for the several quarters applied to the first quarter of this year, it would make its net revenue \$40,388,945. *

Comparing the first twelve months ending the 1st of December, 1847, under the new tariff, with preceding years, we find proofs of increased prosperity. The revenue has largely augmented; so also have the imports, exports, and tonnage, our imports of specie, our coinage at the mint, our agricultural and mineral products, our commerce and navigation, the business upon our lakes, rivers, and coastwise—upon our railroads and canals—whilst in every direction manufacturers are being established or enlarged, and new manufacturing towns and cities are springing into existence. * * * "Instead of ruin, we find prosperity; the manufacturers receiving fair profits, and the workingmen augmented wages and employment." * * * "And now, when, under our successful example, the ports of Europe are most probably about being more widely opened to all our exports, shall we check the advancing spirit of the age, and extinguish the dawning light of commercial freedom? Everywhere nations are being aroused, upon this subject; their statesmen are resisting the interested classes, and exposing

the injury and injustice of shackles upon trade, and will soon enroll the names of other countries on the great international league of commercial freedom for the benefit of mankind. It was our own country and her public functionaries who proclaimed these great truths before they had received the sanction of other nations."

"With such results already from our efforts, we have every motive to persevere until the free-trade doctrines of Great Britain and America—the two great nations of kindred blood and language—shall open the ports and disenthral the commerce of the world."

"France, Russia, Germany, Austria, Italy, Prussia, Switzerland, Holland, Belgium, Denmark, and Sweden, and even China, have moved, or are vibrating or preparing to move in favor of the same great principle; and if our own country and Great Britain adhere to their present enlightened policy, the rest of the world must lose their commerce, or adopt, as they will, our example."

I come now, Mr. Chairman, to speak of the last measure in the series of the triumphs of this Administration, to which my limited time will allow me to give attention at present. I refer, sir, to the constitutional treasury, upon which that great and virtuous statesman, President Van Buren, fell; but which, under Mr. Polk's recommendation, has superseded the act of 1789, for the custody of the public money. This measure, like the revenue tariff, was strenuously opposed by the horde of bankers, brokers, stock-jobbers, and usurers; many of whom, as custodiers of the public treasure, had speculated upon it, from the repeal of the constitutional treasury in 1841, by a Federal Congress, to the date of its restoration, in 1846, by a Democratic Congress; and who, therefore, were unwilling to give it up. The country may now congratulate itself upon a better state of things. The taxes drawn from labor are no longer subject to bank failures and bank frauds—they cannot be prostituted to party purposes—they are in the responsible custody of the law. The simplicity of such a system of finance, in its direct provisions, for the collection, safe-keeping, and disbursement of the public revenues, by officers appointed, and penalty and otherwise bound for that purpose, should commend it to the especial favor of the friends of State rights and republican virtue. But hear, again, what the Secretary of the Treasury (Mr. Walker) says of the operation of the constitutional treasury:

"The receipts and disbursements of the Government in specie, during the last eleven months, have amounted, together, to the sum of \$66,894,403.49; and not a dollar has been lost to the treasury, nor any injury inflicted upon any branch of commerce or business. The constitutional treasury has been tried during a period of war, when it was necessary to negotiate very large loans, when our expenditures were being increased, and when transfers unprecedented in amount were required to distant points for disbursement. During the last eleven months, the Government has received, transferred, and disbursed more specie than during the whole aggregate period of fifty-seven years preceding since the adoption of the Constitution." *

During the year ending 30th June, 1847, our imports of specie were \$24,121,253, most of which, under former systems, must have gone into the banks, to have been made the basis of issues of their paper to the additional amount of fifty or sixty millions of dollars. Such an expansion, during the last spring and summer, accompanied by still higher prices, and followed by a greater fall, and by bankruptcies in England to an extent heretofore unknown, finding our banks and credit greatly expanded, and reacting upon this expansion, would have produced a revolution here exceeding any that has heretofore occurred in the country. A general suspension of the banks would probably have resulted; depressing the wages of labor and prices of property and products; affecting injuriously the operations and credit even of the most solvent, and producing extensive bankruptcies. From this revolution we have been saved by the constitutional treasury, by which the specie imported, instead of being converted into bank issues, has been made

to circulate directly to a great extent as a currency among the people. * * * The banks that so unwisely opposed the system have been rescued, probably, from another suspension; their stockholders, depositors, and note-holders from severe losses; and the country and Government from the ruinous effects of a depreciated paper currency. * * * * * The Government is now disconnected from banks, and yet its stock and notes are at par, although we have been constrained to contract heavy loans, and to keep larger armies in the field than at any former period. But during the last war, when the Government was connected with banks, its six per cent. stock and treasury notes were depreciated twenty-five per cent., payable in bank paper twenty per cent. below par; thus amounting to a loss of forty-five cents in every dollar upon the operations of the Government."

This quotation, Mr. Chairman, closes my hasty and, I fear, very imperfect sketch of the internal or domestic policy of Mr. Polk's administration; my vindication of the model President—the man who has conducted one of the most brilliant wars of any age—who has effected the greatest state reforms of modern times—who, unambitious and unaspiring, rose upon the spontaneous suffrages of his countrymen to the highest civil station on earth, in which he stands forth the faithful reflex of their sentiments and opinions, and the admired representative of a great nation. Yes, sir, all this, and more, has been achieved under the auspices of Mr. Polk's administration; upon which we, his friends, tender you, his opponents, the issues offered by great principles. Will you meet these issues? We challenge you to meet them. If you are still for a national bank, a restrictive tariff, distribution, schemes of internal improvement, *et alia* enormia of Federalism; if you would still pursue a policy which must unavoidably make the rich richer and the poor poorer—which must dangerously strengthen this Government, at the expense of the States and the people,—say so. Do not skulk behind a military chieftain, nor seek to shield yourselves by a temporary excitement or prejudice, which, when passed away, must leave you sunk still deeper in the mire of your political sins.

Yes, sir, under Mr. Polk's administration, the column to Democracy has been completed. Based upon truth, crowned with victory, inscribed with "equal rights," "free trade," "cheap lands," "constitutional treasury," "hard money," and the "onward march of liberty," it will ever stand an imperishable monument of the fame of its architect and the glory of the Republic.

But what, sir, have our opponents done in the mean time? Without recurring to the past, I will speak only of the present. We know you voted that Mexico commenced the present war by her aggressions. We know you voted to place the army and navy of the United States—50,000 volunteers, and \$10,000,000—at the disposal of the President, to wage this war on our part. And we know that you have now turned round and voted that this same war was not commenced by Mexico, but unnecessarily and unconstitutionally by President Polk. We also know that southern pro-slavery men and northern anti-slavery men, of the same political party, have united in electing our worthy and distinguished Speaker, who, in moving the exclusion of slavery from Oregon, where it could not exist, introduced and provoked the agitation of the principle of the Wilmot proviso, for which he should be held responsible or applauded, according to the judgment of a patriotic people.